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JOHN DENISON BALDWIN.

C. A. Wall Esq.
from S. E. Staples

John Denison Baldwin

MEMORIAL

OF

JOHN DENISON BALDWIN:

MINISTER, LEGISLATOR AND JOURNALIST.

By SAMUEL E. STAPLES.

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Hon. JOHN D. BALDWIN, A. M.

One after another of the pioneers in the Anti-Slavery and Free Soil agitation, which has resulted in a regenerated country, where all men are now accounted free and equal before the law, are rapidly passing away, and they hereafter will be remembered by what they have done; a remembrance, not to be despised, but on the contrary, to be cherished and revered while time shall last.

In this great movement, the public press exerted untold influence in bringing to a final issue, results wonderful and grand, which guarantee freedom to all who dwell within our borders, whether native born or aliens from a foreign land, where freedom to the subject exists only in name, if it exists at all.

Among those who were early engaged in this work of renewal and regeneration, was JOHN DENISON BALDWIN, a man who never faltered in the performance of any duty laid upon him, and which to him was made clear, and was supported by the right. He had the "courage of his convictions," and this trait of his character never failed him through a long and useful career.

Mr. Baldwin was born at North Stonington, Conn., September 28, 1809, and died at Worcester, July 8, 1883, aged 73 years, 9 months, and 10 days.

He was married April 3, 1832 to Lemira Hathaway, daughter of Captain Ebenezer Hathaway, of Dighton, Mass., who, with two of their four children, survives him. Two daughters died before the removal of the family to Worcester.

He was the oldest son of Daniel and Hannah (Stanton) Baldwin, of North Stonington, Connecticut. The family had been prominent in the state almost from its first settlement, the earliest ancestor having arrived in New Haven in 1638. His progenitors had been men of substance among the gentry of Buckinghamshire, England, for centuries.

His father, Daniel Baldwin, was born at Stonington, May 21, 1783, and died October, 28, 1855. His third wife, Hannah Stanton, to whom he was married April 21, 1808, was the daughter of Captain Nathaniel Stanton of Groton, Conn. She died March 19, 1877, at the advanced age of 91 years, and 8 days.

When the subject of this sketch was seven years old, the family removed to Chenango county, New York, which at that time, was a wilderness and more inaccessible than the far West of our country today. Here they remained for seven years, and during this time was acquired that fondness for field sports which Mr. Baldwin retained during his life, though but seldom gratified in his later years.

The family returned to North Stonington, in 1823, and there he began to apply himself with great diligence in the pursuit of an education, and with such success that at the age of seventeen he became a public school teacher and maintained, at the same time, his place in one of the classes of Yale College. He did not, however, complete the college course in regular order; but pursued his studies from time to time while engaged in other duties. He began the study of law, but soon abandoned it for theology. He preached for awhile to a Methodist congregation, but later, entered the Yale Divinity School, where he completed the theological course in 1834. He received the honorary degree of Master of Arts, from Yale College in 1839

He was ordained to the work of the Christian ministry at West Woodstock, Conn., September 3, 1834, where he preached till July 25, 1837. He was afterwards settled at North Branford, Conn., from January 17, 1838 to May 1845, and at North Killingly, from April 29, 1846, to September 17, 1849. Mr. Baldwin is still remembered by the older people to whom he ministered as a vigorous preacher, and a man of sagacity and public spirit. A writer in the New Haven Palladium said of him soon after his death, "that he was full of all kinds of queer information that he wrought into his sermons, so that it set young folks a thinking. Then he loved pets of all kinds, and could talk with us about them, asking us as though he wished to learn from us, and making us respect ourselves and him too."

Mr. Baldwin acquired the French and German languages, and by 1844 had begun to give special attention to archaeology and its bearing upon the current schemes of ancient history.

He was alive to the march of improvement, and was interested in scientific researches. He was among the first, as an amateur, to produce pictures by the Daguerreotype process, some of which are still extant.

While the pastor of the church at North Killingly, he was elected to the legislature of Connecticut as a Free Soil member, and as Chairman of the Committee on Education he reported a bill for the establishment of Normal Schools, a subject which had been under consideration for ten years; having been agitated and discussed for years previous by Gallaudet, Barnard, and others, with much earnestness, but the subject was not brought to a final issue till the year 1850, when the bill presented by Mr. Baldwin became a law, and the first Normal School of Connecticut was soon in successful operation. He was chosen a member of the first Board of Trustees upon whom devolved the location of the school.

The late Rev. Merrill Richardson, at that time a resident of Terryville, in Conn., was actively engaged for some years in the work of preparing the minds of the people for this useful, and now considered necessary instrumentality, in the educational system of schools; and added greatly, by his voice and pen, in promoting and bringing to a successful issue this important work.

While a member of the legislature, Mr. Baldwin was influential also in organizing the Free Soil party, being in sympathy and active co-operation with the men of his time who regarded chattel slavery as the great sin of the nation and a revolting crime against humanity, that must be removed and blotted out forever. In the furtherance of this object, the better to carry out his principles upon this subject, and to exert an influence beyond what the individual alone could do, from that time he turned his attention from the ministry to journalism. He succeeded William H. Burleigh in the publication of the Free Soil newspaper, *The Charter Oak*, printed in Hartford, which afterwards became known as the *Republican*.

His interest in the *Republican* began in 1849, and continued till 1852, when he left Hartford for Boston, to assume control of the

Daily Commonwealth newspaper, being a joint owner with William Claflin, John B. Alley, Dr. Samuel G. Howe and William Spooner. This arrangement continued for five years. The paper was afterwards known at the *Daily Telegraph*, and was subsequently merged in the grand consolidation of several newspapers with the *Traveller*.

It was the intention of the buyers to establish a daily, after the style of the leading New York papers, but for some reason this project was abandoned after the consolidation had been effected.

While in the management of the *Commonwealth*, some notable persons were constant visitors at the office, and other men, since become noted, were occupied upon the paper. William S. Robinson was assistant editor, Charles W. Slack, city editor, and Robert Carter was one of the principal writers.

Charles Sumner, Henry Wilson and Theodore Parker were almost daily visitors, the *Commonwealth* office being regarded as their headquarters.

For a while Mr. Baldwin was owner and editor of the *Cambridge Chronicle*, but he disposed of his interest in this paper after a few months, and in 1859, in company with his sons, John Stanton and Charles Clinton, bought the *Worcester Daily* and *Weekly Spy*, and continued his interest in this establishment during the remainder of his life.

Through all these years he was the responsible head of the editorial department, though for the last two or three years he gave up office work, but occasionally wrote leading articles for his paper. Mr. Baldwin was a clear and forcible writer, and no one would be likely to mistake his meaning. He was sincere in his statements and always reliable. As a journalist he exerted much influence, and it is safe to say, that it was always upon the side of right and justice.

At the time Mr. Baldwin assumed control of the *Spy*, it was not in a flourishing condition, having passed out of the hands of Mr. Earle, who for many years was its principal editor, and who gave to the paper great influence during the period of the Free Soil agitation. Mr. Baldwin, by his skillful and laborious labors soon restored its prosperity, and acquired for the paper a renewed and extended influence which did not fail of speedy recognition.

Mr. Baldwin's deep and abiding interest in the question of free soil and a free people led him to look carefully to the political issues of his time. Having become a representative man, and being extensively known through his journalistic work, he was selected as a delegate to the Republican National Convention of 1860, where his ability and influence received that recognition which was due to him; at his suggestion, Hannibal Hamlin of Maine, was nominated as Vice-President, on the ticket with Abraham Lincoln. The results of this election, how wonderful, how grand!

Mr. Baldwin's reputation as a sagacious political counsellor, and his services to the party by his pen and otherwise, suggested his nomination for Congress in 1862, and he was elected by a large majority a Representative in the thirty-eighth Congress, and by a still greater preponderance of votes was re-elected to the thirty-ninth and fortieth. During his service in Congress he was a member of the committees on Expenditures, on Public Buildings, on the District of Columbia, on Printing, and on the Library. He was not a frequent speaker, but diligent and thorough in his committee work and in the service of his constituents. In his last term, as a member of the Committee on the Library, he attacked the difficult problem of international copyright, and his report and speeches on that subject attracted much attention. The exciting political events of that time distracted the attention of Congress from that subject, and his bill made no progress, but his name will always be associated with the history of the agitation for the rights of authors.

It is a somewhat remarkable fact, undisputed I think, that he was the only literary man in the thirty-ninth Congress. His tastes led him to be a frequent visitor to the library where he found much to aid him in the pursuit of those studies concerning the ancient peoples and civilizations of a pre-historic period, a study in which he liked to dwell, and the results of which, he gave to the world in a volume entitled, "Pre-historic Nations; or Inquiries concerning some of the Great Peoples and Civilizations of Antiquity, and their Probable Relations to a still Older Civilization of the Ethiopians or Cushites of Arabia." This work was issued in 1869.

In 1872, was published his work concerning another portion of the field of archæological research, under the title of "Ancient

America, in Notes on American Archæology," its purpose being to give a summary of what is known of American antiquities, with some thoughts and suggestions relative to their significance. This volume grew out of a series of papers originally prepared for the *Spy*. It has had a large circulation and much influence in directing attention to the interesting and mysterious remains of the earlier races on this continent.

These works do not profess to be the result of original investigation among the primitive sources of knowledge on those subjects. They are in part compilations of material not readily accessible to most readers, and in part the author's speculations, ingenious and plausible in the main, not presented as fact, but as probable conjectures, which, if accepted, would explain much that is obscure, mysterious, or taken literally, impossible.

Mr. Baldwin, also, took great interest in genealogical inquiries and published the following works upon this subject.

In 1880, "A Record of the Descendants of John Baldwin of Stonington, Conn., with notices of other Baldwins who settled in America in Early Colonial Times." This was followed in 1881, by "A Record of the Descendants of Capt. George Denison of Stonington, Conn., prepared by Mr. Baldwin and Rev. William Clift."

In 1882, he published his last work on this subject, under the title of "*Thomas Stanton* of Stonington, Conn., an incomplete record of his descendants."

He also furnished a large amount of material for the Baldwin Genealogy, compiled by Charles Candee Baldwin, of Cleveland, Ohio, which was published in 1881.

The collection of these family records appears to have been a favorite pursuit with him during the later years of his life, and in which he spent much time and took great delight. From what we know of the man, however, this was not done so much to gratify his taste and inclination, and the enjoyment it afforded, but to gather together the facts of family history, that others who should come after him might receive the benefit of his labors.

While Mr. Baldwin was not a rapid writer, yet by close application, he wrote much, and has left behind him a literary record that any man might covet. He was, also, at some periods of his life a large contributor to the Quarterlies and Magazines.

Among his published addresses were the following:

"Lessons from the Grave. A Discourse delivered in North Branford, June 12, 1842, and occasioned by the Death of Dea. Daniel Wheadon."

Speech on "State Sovereignty and Treason," delivered in the House of Representatives, Washington, March 5, 1864, the House being in Committee of the Whole on the State of the Union.

Speech, "Congress and Reconstruction," delivered in the House of Representatives, April 7, 1866,

Speech, "Human Rights and Human Races," delivered in the House of Representatives, January 11, 1868, in reply to a speech of Hon. James Brooks, of New York, on the Negro Race.

Mr. Baldwin possessed a genius for the beautiful, whether in nature, art, or poetry, and it is to be regretted that he so seldom gave expression to his finer sentiments in verse. The clearness of his statement, the purity of his language, and the force of expression, cannot fail to be admired. But, in the later years of his life he found little opportunity in which to gratify the poetic taste, and in earlier life, but infrequently wrote in verse.

I have purposely omitted to mention till the last, his first venture in book-making. This was a collection of poems issued in 1847, when he was thirty-eight years of age, entitled, "*The Story of Raymond Hill and other Poems*;" and was published by William D. Ticknor & Company of Boston. This little work is "dedicated to Mrs. Mary Howitt, of England, in token of admiration for her character, and gratitude for the pleasure derived from her volumes." In the preface he says: "These poems are firstlings. They are published, not because I suppose they have any very extraordinary merit, nor because I have no hope of writing something better; but because I think they will find friendly readers, and, imperfect as they are, do something to encourage others to love Truth and Beauty,—and love them, not as abstractions merely, but as realities to be felt and manifested all along the ways of human life."

The following is selected from his miscellaneous poems; and, as it shows so finely, both the style and the spirit of the author, is here reproduced for the benefit of such as may be permitted to read this brief memorial of one, whose tender sympathies are therein so beautifully expressed.

THE CHILD'S GRAVE.

Sleep, little one! the summer winds are breathing
A gentle hymn, to lull thy quiet rest;
Around thy tomb, with mournful beauty wreathing,
The ivy creeps, in freshening verdure drest.

Sleep on, my love, the summer flowers are springing,
In holy peace, above thy mouldering head,
To guard thy dust, and from their bosoms flinging
A mingled sweetness o'er thy silent bed.

We miss thee, love! thy joyous face, once blushing
With rosy light, death-shades have overcast;
And ah! how oft these heart-felt tears are gushing,
To think our eyes on thee have looked their last.

We miss those hours, when thro' our hearts was stealing
The merry music of thy fairy feet;
We miss those hours, when every pulse of feeling
Thrilled quick and warm, thy trusting eyes to greet.

We miss our babe, when evening gathers round us;
Thy place is vacant on thy mother's breast!
We wake no more to feel the spell that bound us,
When, once, to ours thine infant lips were pressed!

Sleep, blessed one! no more for us awaking!
The worm feeds sweetly on our faded flower;
We laid thee here; but, oh, our hearts were breaking—
Breaking to feel Death's unrelaxing power.

Where art thou now? the soul, that once was pouring,
Through this still dust, a quick, mysterious glow,
Lives somewhere yet; it vanished, heavenward soaring,
Far from all pain and blight, all earthly woe.

Where dost thou dwell? It must be thou art wearing
A radiant light, on thy enfranchised soul,
In some bright world, thy part with angels bearing,
Where hymns of holy joy forever roll.

To that deep life, God's love hath surely borne thee,
Our cherished one!—nor seek we to reclaim;
How much we loved, how much we miss and mourn thee,
He knows alone—and blessed be his name!

The last time, it is believed, that Mr. Baldwin appeared before a public assembly, as a speaker, was at Mechanics Hall, June 24, 1878, at the exercises attending the re-interment of the remains of Isaiah Thomas, when he read a very interesting account of the labors of Mr. Thomas in the work of the Revolution.

This address received well merited praise, and was alike creditable to the writer and the occasion.

Mr. Baldwin was a member of the American Oriental Society of New Haven, Conn., established in 1843. He was elected a member of the New England Historic-Genealogical Society, April 22, 1868; of the American Antiquarian Society, October 21, 1869; and an Honorary member of The Worcester Society of Antiquity, January 2, 1877.

In his letter of acceptance to the latter society, after expression of thanks for its good will, and the honor conferred, he said: "I have full sympathy with the aims of your Society, and I shall find special pleasure in doing what I can to aid it in promoting these aims. I should rejoice to see the disposition to 'remember the days that are past,' and to collect for preservation, memorials of the past generations, much more prevalent than it is now."

One who knew him most intimately, wrote this just tribute to his memory.

"Mr. Baldwin was a man of imposing stature, much exceeding six feet in height, of large frame and great muscular strength. In his early manhood, his massive head, erect figure and stalwart proportions, indicative of activity and power, gave him an aspect of uncommon force, and dignity. His mind, like his body, was large and vigorous. His political sagacity was highly esteemed by those who had long been associated with him. Though so much of a recluse, especially in his later years, he knew human nature well, and could foresee with great accuracy the political effect of any measure or event. His election forecasts were in general singularly near the truth, and his judgment of men, their character, capabilities and popularity, was rarely at fault. His advice in political matters was often sought and was highly valued. It was delivered confidently but without arrogance, and more than once those who had refused to be guided by it at an important juncture had cause

to regret that it had been rejected. As a writer Mr. Baldwin was direct, clear and forcible. His style had no ornament. It was sometimes rugged, but always strong and sincere. His wide range of reading and retentive memory gave him a vast store of facts, and his knowledge of political history was especially large and accurate. But though his profession of journalism kept his mind occupied much with such subjects, his favorite pursuit was the study of antiquity, both the dim past of which authentic history gives only hints and suggestions, and the less remote, but almost as difficult, field of family genealogy to which most of his latest years, while his health allowed, was devoted."

I should do injustice to myself, and the distinguished man, whose life I have attempted briefly to portray, did I not give place in this memorial to his contemporaries in journalism who knew him so long, and so well, and whose words are more appreciative and suitable than any I can express. The following extracts from various sources, show his character and qualities, as a minister, a legislator and a journalist, in a manner that will commend them to all, who, may read this imperfect sketch of the life of a noble man.

There are men in Connecticut who have not forgotten the Hon. John D. Baldwin. His connection with our state politics in 1848-49-50, and along in those years, will be remembered by those who remember the Free Soil party and its influence in this state. Mr. Baldwin was a conscientious abolitionist, who at one time was the conductor of *The Charter Oak*, the old Connecticut organ of the free soilers. He was respected as an honest man, and he had more aptitude for practical politics than his predecessor, Mr. Burleigh.—*Hartford Times.*

By the death of John Denison Baldwin, for so many years the chief editor of the *Worcester Spy*, the press of Massachusetts has lost one of its oldest, as well as the most honored, of its representatives.—*Lowell Citizen.*

The editorial fraternity of New England will lament the death of the venerable John D. Baldwin, senior editor and proprietor of the *Worcester Spy.* A man of the highest character, a self-educated

man of broad scholarship, earnest in the cause of human rights in the days when it required courage as well as convictions to be an abolitionist, his life work has been long, honorable and useful, and he goes to his reward leaving to all who knew him or have felt his influence a blessed memory.—*Hartford Courant.*

He was a patriarch among the journalists of the state, venerable in years and dignified in manners, and was respected alike for his ability, his integrity and his fearless support of his principles.—*Boston Traveller.*

Mr. Baldwin had distinguished himself during a busy life by successful labors as a minister, a journalist and a legislator, and devoted the well-earned leisure of his later years to valuable historic studies. Among the veteran editors and public men of New England his name held a deservedly high place.—*Providence Journal.*

Mr. Baldwin led a laborious life. If he was not a brilliant editor he was a useful one. In his earlier days he was not afraid of the anti-slavery agitation, when many of his confreres hesitated to speak out boldly. He was a pioneer free soiler when it did not pay to speak for human rights, and happily he lived to see slavery abolished and every foot of our national domain consecrated forever to freedom. He rests from his labors and his works do follow him. —*Springfield Union.*

Another veteran New England journalist has gone to his rest. The Hon. John D. Baldwin of the *Worcester Spy* died suddenly at his home in that city on Sunday morning. In every position which he has ever held, whether as minister of the gospel, state or national legislator, or journalist, he has performed honorable service. Although during his later years he has devoted his time to historical studies rather than to the active duties of journalism, he will be greatly missed by his brethren in the profession throughout New England.—*Providence Press.*

The Hon. John D. Baldwin, who died in Worcester on Sunday, was for several years a man of large and useful influence in the city in which he lived, in the state, and in the nation. Beginning life as a clergyman, he became an editor, and as such, was distinguished for good sense and steadfastness of principle, rather than

for brilliancy, although he was a good writer. He always seemed to regard a newspaper rather as a means of publishing sound opinions, and so influencing men's minds, than as an organ of news. For sensational reporter's work, and much of the product of modern journalistic enterprise, he never had much favor. He was a man of wide information and cultivated intelligence, who had strong likes and dislikes, and he did his editorial work with a conscientious fidelity. He was a sturdy politician and a sagacious one; but he had a fondness for studies which were wholly alien to politics, and which kept him in sympathy with scholarly men and literary aims. He was always kindly to young men, and very willing to aid those who had a worthy ambition with good counsel and substantial service. In the earlier days of his career as journalist he was associated with the leaders of the Free Soil party, and made acquaintances which were long continued. He became editor of the *Spy* at a time when its fortunes had been wrecked, and to his steady industry, business capacity, and power as a writer, its survival and development into one of the best of the papers issued in the smaller cities of the country is due. During the war period and the period of reconstruction he was one of the trusted leaders of the republican party in this state, and his predilections were always in favor of a bold and radical policy. He was more conservative in methods than in opinions. Among the latest acts of his active participation in affairs was his earnest work in the movement which resulted in sending Bristow delegates from Massachusetts to the national convention of 1876. In recent years he has withdrawn himself from the strife of affairs, and left the conduct of the paper to his sons and their assistants, whom he had selected, being able to pass the evening of his days in comfortable leisure, craving little society beyond that of his family and his favorite books.—*Boston Advertiser.*

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